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CONTENTS

	Page
EXPERIMENTS IN TIME . . .	5
THE NEW BOOKS	13

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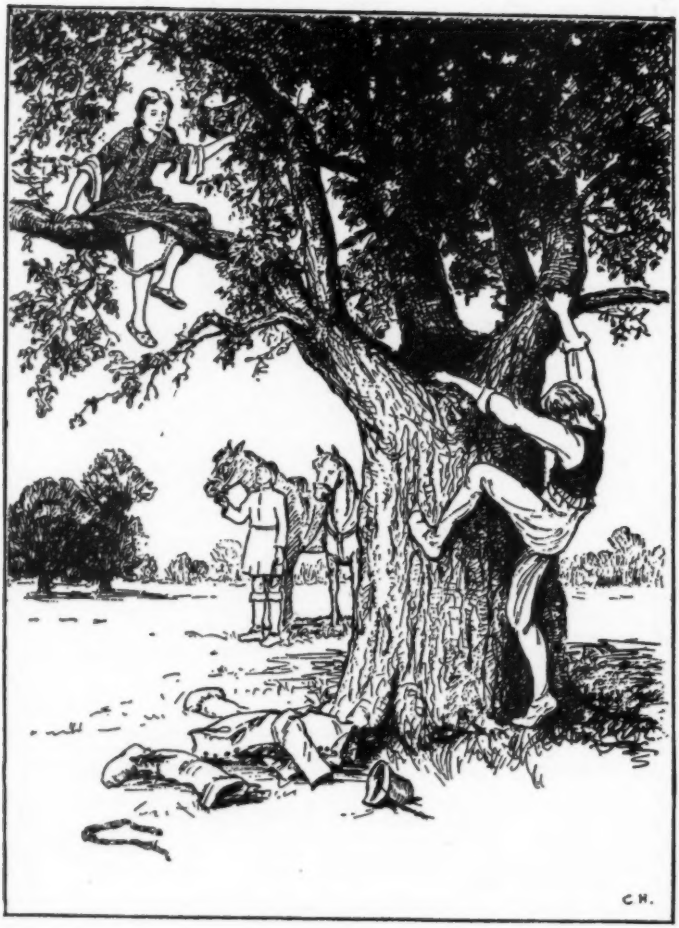

Illustrated by Cynthia Harnett from *The Wool-Pack* (Methuen)

THE
JUNIOR BOOKSHELF
JANUARY, 1956

Experiments in Time

by M. S. CROUCH

THE veil is so thin one can almost see through it. The past is there, not in an endless stream which stretches backwards through infinite ages but, as it were, in thin layers, so that those who have the skill can cut their way through to other times. Most people have some sense of the past, which is heightened at certain times and in certain places. The ages crowd in on the lonely traveller who passes a downland barrow just after nightfall. In certain moods, and in certain lights, the ruins of Rievaulx or Tintern become clothed again in masonry, glass and lead. And some have heard "of a summer evening late, the beat of a horse's feet and the swish of a skirt in the dew" when the old lost roads regain their life.

This sense of the past lies at the heart of many fine children's books. It gives a singularly persuasive power to books as dissimilar as *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *A Traveller in Time.* The books which break through the veil of the past are a distinctive group; they meet problems unlike those of the historical novel. At its best, in *The Woolpack* or *The Eagle of the Ninth,* the historical novel recreates a period of the past in all its detail. The reader becomes for the moment one with the fourteenth-century woolman or

the Roman soldier. In the "Time" novel, the reader is able to see past and present simultaneously, and to trace the threads which join the two.

Kipling's feeling for the past was among the chief guiding forces of his life. It is fundamental to Hinduism; in India one lives daily with the centuries, and a story like *The Tomb of His Ancestor* is a record of actuality! In that extraordinary story *Wireless* he uses the same idea, in a quite commonplace setting, with profoundly moving effect. It is, however, in the two "Puck" books that he handles the theme most happily. "Happily" is the word; Kipling was greater, in *Kim* for instance — he was never as happy as in these unforgettable stories of the living past.

The secret of "Puck" is as much topographical as historical. The Weald, the Down, the Marsh and the Wall are essential agents in the stories. And that is one of the fundamental secrets of the "Time" stories; they invoke the Spirit of Time and also the Genius of Place. The "Puck" stories are unusual among "Time" books in that they bring the people of the past into present times, and the children who are privileged to share the adventures hear eye-witness accounts but do not themselves witness the events. This device has its rewards. How vividly is the continuity of tradition illustrated when Sir Harry Dawes visits the twentieth-century scene of his childhood, or when the modern Hobden hoodwinks his employer in the immemorial Susssex way. These are great and moving stories — I have never read *The Tree of Justice* without tears — they are very good history, which gains in intensity from its framework of the present.

The machinery of the "Puck" stories is very simple. After the first involuntary evocation of Puck, the

children have the power to see what they shall see and hear what they shall hear "though It shall have happened three thousand year" without any of these difficult formulae with which less fortunate children have gained access to the past. It was a good idea to wipe out the memory of what had happened with Oak, Ash and Thorn, for this prevents any of the theoretical speculation about the nature of Time which is a blemish on some lesser stories.

The machinery looms large in E. Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet.* Nesbit "took up" Time, as she took up the Baconian Heresy and other theories, with whole-hearted, uncritical exuberance. *The Amulet* bears all the marks of a personal enthusiasm, as it does of many visits to the British Museum. The interest is there, but the knowledge is ill-digested. The two "Arden" books show a much finer control of the machinery of Time and a deeper understanding of its meaning. She sends her children back into the past, not only for magnificent adventures, not only to understand the past, but to interpret the present. *Harding's Luck* is a sociological tract ; for once the author's Fabian conscience ousted her child-like sense of humour. I have always thought this story of poor lame Dicky among E. Nesbit's finest books. It is much more profound, as it is much sadder than *The House of Arden*; but it is deeply pondered and deeply felt. The device by which Dicky goes back in Time is elaborate, but it has all the Nesbit magic, and matches the strange moon-melancholy mood of the story. The book is more completely realised than *The House of Arden,* although children rightly love the downright Mouldiwarp in the latter.

If Hilda Lewis's charming *Ship that Flew* derives from *The Amulet, A Traveller in Time* is in the

Arden tradition. That is not to say that it is in any sense imitative. Most writers are born to write one book; the tragedy is that economic forces require a writer to go on writing! *A Traveller in Time* is Mrs. Uttley's book. It holds the essence of her art, her detailed and precise memory, her feeling for nature and sense of oneness with the past. Of all the children who have passed through the veil, Penelope is the one who most clearly understood the nature of the mystery of which she was part. The secret of her story, as was that of the Ardens, is heredity. The sixteenth and the twentieth-century inhabitants of Thackers have more in common than they have differences, and it seems quite natural that Penelope should pass so easily through the door and live among her ancestors of the first Elizabeth's age. "They lived here once . . . and some say they live here now," says Aunt Tissie. It is true. *A Traveller in Time* is the most complete realisation in children's fiction of the theory of Time; it would be difficult to rate the book too highly on any count.

John Buchan was, one might think, a born writer of the "Time" novel. A great historian, with a deep conviction of the importance of tradition, he was also in the fullest sense a man of his time, a great man of affairs. That *The Long Traverse* is not completely successful is due, doubtless, to its incomplete state. Had he lived to fill in the details, what is a profoundly interesting fragment might have been his finest book. It is the story of Canada, as seen in the golden sunset waters of Canadian lakes, streams and seas by a boy who despises the past. But, as his father, a notable angler, says: "If your back cast is not good, your forward cast will be a mess." The fullest statement of the theory of Time comes from the Indian Negog,

through whose guidance Donald sees the pageant of the past. "Today Time is like this river here. You see the waters for an instant, but you cannot see whence they come or whither they go. But to some of our fathers Time at certain moments was a lake which could be scanned from end to end. To them all Time was one." *The Long Traverse* is largely didactic. Perhaps in revision the didactic bones might have been more skilfully covered.

That curious masterpiece *The Eildon Tree* is hardly history, although it gives a fine romantic picture of Mediaeval Scotland. It differs from most earlier "Time" stories in that the children who go back to Bruce's days are not merely observers of the past but actors in it. The same is true of a finer, but much more difficult, story *The Big House,* in which Naomi Mitchison travels through that border country between history and faerie which belongs so naturally to the Celt. Like Patricia Lynch's *Orla of Burren,* another manifestation of the same genius, this is a strange, exhilarating mixture of magic, history and homeliness. Su and Winkie are among the most ordinary characters; their adventures in fairyland and in history are the more convincing. And, if it is not always easy to tell what is history and what fantasy, Miss Mitchison's sense of social justice burns through the book. More than any other story of the kind *The Big House* brings home the essential meaning of history.

There is not much history in *Dream Gold* or *The Children of Green Knowe,* although the latter is in many ways one of the most interesting experiments in Time. A strange haunting book, too elusive to please many children, it shows an understanding of children as profound as that of Walter de la Mare or Forrest Reid. Little Tolly bridges the centuries without

artificial aids; when the person and the place coincide, time ceases to exist, and it seems perfectly natural to all the modern characters that Tolly should have as playmates his ancestors who died in the Great Plague. The wonder of the story is enhanced by the fact that it is accepted without wonder. There is, alas, little wonder in Noel Streatfeild's *The Fearless Treasure,* in which a most elaborate device for evoking the past produces only a series of flat murals, charmingly painted but without depth or movement. There is movement in Laurence Meynell's *Under the Hollies,* but it is the movement of characters in fancy dress rather than of the living past glimpsed through the veil.

Ronald Welch's *The Gauntlet,* when compared with his *Knight Crusader,* offers a good example of the difference between the "Time" novel and historical romance. *Knight Crusader* is a good, if not exceptional, piece of historical reconstruction. The reader is introduced in its pages to the ways, if not the thoughts, of twelfth-century Palestine. In *The Gauntlet,* he is made forcibly aware of the differences, and the likenesses, between our age and that of the Marcher Lords. Written as a straight historical novel, it would have been a very different story; it would, I think, have been infinitely less effective. The machinery of the story is very simple; Peter, putting on an old gauntlet among the Welsh hills, finds himself living as the twelfth-century Peter de Blois, whose tomb he has seen in the village church. He plays a full part in the life of the past while retaining fully his awareness of the strange experiment to which he is being subjected. Heredity and topography are again the motive forces in this story. Peter is of the right blood, and he is in the right place; this is the coincidence

which makes his experiences possible, and indeed inevitable. *The Gauntlet* is a memorable story. Had the author given himself up more freely to the splendour of his idea, had he been a little less the schoolmaster, it would have a place in the first rank of "Time" novels.

If we except *Mr. Wicker's Window,* which uses Time as an excuse for adventure rather than for the examination of the nature of history, the latest experiment in Time is Meriel Trevor's curious and impressive novel *Sun Slower, Sun Faster.* This is the most serious and conscious essay on the theme since *The Long Traverse.* Unfortunately — and this must be considered a blemish — the author uses her book as a means of grinding a sectarian axe. The story is beautifully told. Cecil goes back in time — the key in this case is a little Corpus Christi medallion — and sees in each age the struggles of the Catholic Church against the forces of intolerance and cruelty. There are some fine moments — Bishop Ken praying in his deserted Abbey sticks longest in the memory — and after each episode the return to the present brings home a sharp lesson in history and sociology.

"Was time like a curtain that hung between *Then* and *Now*? And if you could find a chink, could you peep through?" wonders Cecil. She, like Dan and Una, and Penelope, and Donald, are guided to the chink by the forces of heredity and of place. What they see matters much to the reader who shares their experience, for "in my beginning is my end" and the problems of present and the secrets of future may well find their solution in the past.

Illustrated by D. Walsh from *To Capture the King*
(Phoenix House)

The New Books

PICTURE BOOKS

CRAIGIE, D. *The Saucy Cockle.* Illus. by the author
36 pp. 8½ × 7½ . . . . Parrish 8/6

The story of a boat run mainly for the pleasure of children, but which now has to compete with a more modern vessel. The Saucy Cockle is reprieved after its rescue of Jim Bottle the fisherman in a heavy storm. Amusing and brightly coloured.

ETS, M. H. *In the forest.* Illus. by the author
39 pp. 10 × 7½. Oblong boards . Faber 7/6

This is, I believe, the first book by this artist-author to be published in this country. A little boy who had a paper hat and a new horn went into the forest. When they heard the horn the various animals decided they would follow the boy. They have a picnic, games, hide and seek and so on.

The pictures, apparently by the scraper-board process, have interest, but I confess to finding the brief text rather silly — but then, I am not a very little boy.

FATIO, L. *The Happy lion.* Illus. by R. Duvoisin
30 pp. 10¼ × 8. Boards . . Bodley Head 6/6

Undoubtedly the best of the very disappointing crop of picture books of 1955 *The Happy lion* is an amusing story to which Mr. Duvoisin has done full justice in both drawing and colour. It is the story of a lion in a zoo in a French provincial town who walks out of his cage when the gate is accidently left open. He didn't like that because anyone might walk in so instead he decided to go to see his friends in the town. He thought it would be nice to return their visits. Unfortunately his visit was misunderstood by the humans in the town and caused a panic until his young friend Francois, the keeper's son, appeared and led him back to the Zoo.

FRANCOISE. *Jeanne-Marie counts her sheep.* Illus. by
the author. 32 pp. 10 × 8 . Brockhampton Press 8/6

Large type, simple text and satisfying colour with clear outline will combine to give this book an immediate appeal to the youngest readers. The brief text tells of what might be

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done if Patapon the white sheep has one, two, three, four or more lambs, and apart from its intrinsic interest it makes a simple introduction to numbers. One of the few worth-while picture books of the year.

Ross, D. *The Little Red Engine goes travelling* Illus. by L. Wood. 32 pp. 10 × 7¼. Oblong boards Faber 8/6

I must confess to an uneasy feeling that the standard of the Little Red Engine books has gradually deteriorated since the first one, illustrated by Lewitt-Him. This last story tells of the narrow escape of the Engine from the scrap heap at Taddlecombe to make room for the modern diesel type introduced in the cause of progress. He is bought by an Indian Maharajah and goes to India to be used on the purchaser's estate. It is not a good story and it can be hoped that the Engine may now be left there to end his days.

Sewell, H. *Blue barns.* Illus. by the Author 10 × 8½ . . . . . Woodfield 8/6

Helen Sewell's work is familiar in this country, principally on account of *Ten Saints,* which Oxford presented in so noble an edition a year ago. *Blue barns* is more characteristic of her style, less formal, more naturalistic, and with plenty of good humour.

The story is a simple one of seven ducklings befriended by a gander and of their ultimate flight with the wild ducks. The words are few, carefully selected, and with an individual quality far removed from the syrup which so often accompanies pictures of farmyard animals. A nice picture book, in fact, a worthy companion, on the best shelf, for Clifford Webb's *Butterwick Farm,* with whose mannered style it makes an effective contrast.

FOR CHILDREN UNDER TEN

Berg, L. *Fire engine by mistake.* Illus. by Biro 88 pp. 7¾ × 5¼ . . Brockhampton Press 5/-

Mrs. Berg can probably claim to be this publisher's best author. It is surprising, therefore, that her books are not presented more creditably. We are given 87 pages bulked out to appear many more and Biro's pictures looking as crude and

tawdry as anything in a cheap-jack's store. Consequently the reader receives a poor impression of what is, after all, a well-told story with a modicum of humour. *Fire Engine by mistake* is by no means one of Leila Berg's best efforts. It starts well with an air of reality, but when the engine runs away by itself and finishes up in a field where apparently no-one tries to find it, the reality vanishes and the story loses conviction. A return to reality later in the book does not redeem the story.

TODD, B. E. *Worzel Gummidge and the Railway Scarecrows*. Illus. by J. Crockford. 191 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ Evans 8/6

The first Worzel Gummidge book was published in 1936. Perhaps the best tribute to Miss Euphan Todd's remarkable scarecrow characters is to say that they are still as fresh, as unexpected and as amusing in this new book as they were twenty years ago. But do children enjoy the stories? Presumably the answer is yes, for they have been successful as broadcast plays and the first Gummidge play has appeared on television. It seems to me, however, that although young children may enjoy the doings and adventures of this scarecrow world — for instance, in this latest volume the play near the railway lines and in and out of the waiting room and signal box, will appeal — the real charm of the writing and the Gummidge talk can only be appreciated by older readers. Nice for the adult who has to read out loud. A pity for those boys and girls who may dismiss the story for being apparently only for the tinies. *Worzel Gummidge and the Railway Scarecrows* seems well up to the standard of earlier stories. Gummidge is still the most interesting character who hardly ever makes a remark that is not worth looking at twice ("Ladybird's a daft name to call a inseck that may be a genelman," or "If a human steals somthink as wasn't locked up, other humans locks him up"), but a new character, the railway scarecrow with its mad railway talk, runs him close. The main human character in this story is a nice small boy called Robin, who comes from London for his first visit to the country and accepts the talking scarecrows without too much surprise as just a part of the strange country world in which he finds himself. A new illustrator has been found for this book, but alas not yet the perfect one. Perhaps it is impossible to make scarecrows look likable. They are so much better drawn with words.

FOR CHILDREN FROM TEN TO FOURTEEN

BURT, M. E. *Call of the River.* 127 pp. 7½ × 5 Country Life 8/6

This is the life story of an otter told with a knowledge and love of all the countryside and its creatures. The story follows a pattern, a pattern that has its beginning, quiet and gentle, its ending noble and climactic, and its numerous juxtapositions of action, but interspersed are many delightful still moments when river, field, bank and hedegrow, are brought within the close and intimate range of our senses, each detail becoming an isolated and poignant experience. The writing does at times descend to mere cliches and the atmosphere is then partly lost but one can feel even through the inadequacy of the words, the author's own searching for expression, while words and experience are often happily fused together. There are some good photographs which amplify but are not essential for the text.

"GOLDEN GORSE." *Mary in the Country.* Illus. by E. H. Shepard. 162 pp. 7½ × 5 . Country Life 9/6

This story resembles one long stream that chatters incessantly, deviates neither to the right nor to the left and sternly follows a straight and narrow way. This author would seem at times to be an unsmiling pedagogue with a tendency to patronise and talk down to the child. The tale tells of the doings of one Mary, when she comes to live in the country for the first time and of her efforts at gardening and the training of animals. The instructor in her various new pursuits is her country-bred aunt and she it is too who sets the tone of the tale. It is she who gives the air of didacticism as the wealth of instruction rather primly falls from her lips. There is here, however, a genuine love of the countryside while the information given displays an air of infectious enthusiasm. The style, although too bare at times, has a simplicity that is also disarming and is not out of keeping with the rigorous essentials of a simple life. The illustrations by Ernest Shepard are admirably suited, always displaying an easy and unadorned naturalness.

HYMAN, F. *Who's for the North.* Illus. by D. Walsh 128 pp. 8¼ × 5 . . . Phoenix House 8/6

This story begins with the hero as Queen's page at the elegant court of Richard II. Very soon he travels with

Hotspur, the most popular soldier of the day, to Alnwick Castle there to be initiated into a very different type of life. On the eve of his departure for the North he overhears a plot to kill Hotspur, a plot which he and his friend determine to circumvent. This apart, the story is concerned mainly with martial pursuits, tourney and duels, culminating in the battle of Otterburn.

The use of the first person narrative, besides not being generally popular with young readers, also acts as a handicap to the author since the necessity of utilising a very young boy as the vehicle of expression for thoughts, sentiments and philosophies beyond his capacity gives a somewhat didactic and textbook flavour to parts of the story. Hotspur is the ideal of his day, though glamourised rather beyond belief, but the fictional part of this year of his life outweighs the historical, and the background, though painstakingly drawn, lacks the incisiveness which would fix it in the reader's memory.

JEANS, A. A. *Listen to the Wind.* Illus. by D. Jones
160 pp. 8 × 5 . . . . . Parrish 10/6

Harriet and Jeremy, children of a century ago, are conversant with the "Wind People," and while visiting their cousin Emma at their Grandmother's house are soon given the opportunity of introducing her to these peoples and their realm. This happens when the three of them are kidnapped by gypsies and they have to call upon these strange people for help. From that moment their adventures are touched with intrinsic magic, gay adventure and the charm of another world. Its inhabitants, the four Winds, the Gale Birds, Moonbeam, Sunshine, Thundercloud and Miranda the Witch are real vivacious personalities with colours all their own and the land is a sparkling new one. Miss Jeans' work is indeed as refreshing as the Winds she writes about. Her writing is clear cut, resembling some fine delicate engraving, and faithful to the every mood of child and adult. The unexpected angles of life and conversation, both in Grandmother's house and in the Land of the Winds, are there as well as the full rounded contours. The illustrations by Disley Jones are as gay and strange as the tale, as full of excitement and fun, yet touched with the same sympathetic and awakening hand, that has a universal appeal. The book was originally a play but has been well translated by the author and decor artist into story and illustrations.

MACKENZIE, K. *Jumping Jan.* Illus. by V. Morgan
183 pp. 8 × 5 . . . . . Evans 9/6

The Jervis family are an ill assorted menage dominated by a selfish and dramatic mother. Into this household comes Janice Maddever whose job it is to look after their several horses, but it is not merely the horses who become her protegés. Her kindly thoughtful nature leads her to help, consciously or unconsciously, each member of the family — the crippled Irving, the selfish Sarah, the would-be playwright and dishonest Garry and the fat Ellaline who longs, against her mother's wishes, to become a nurse. The "horse" interest is present throughout but for the most part is only an underlying theme. Not until the finale does this factor predominate and then Janice rides to glory at the White City. There is a good sprinkling of fresh ideas in this book and only towards the end are they gathered together into a conventional melée. There is a variety of interests — writing, acting, nursing, as well as horse riding, are all part of the picture, and while the picture is only a very brief sketch it is attractive. The characters give the same fleeting impression but their hold on life has sufficient tenacity to convince for a moment. Miss Mackenzie writes with obvious sincerity and a feeling for the deeper things of life, for which we are grateful, but while she may possess a vision she cannot ably translate that vision into words. Her writing all too often treads the mundane paths of undistinguished plodding labour while her ideas hover above and alone.

REASON, J. *To Capture the King.* Illus. by D. Walsh
144 pp. 8¼ × 5 . . . Phoenix House 8/6

The still-born Elibank plot, the final flicker of Jacobite machinations in England, provides a rather intangible centre round which to arrange a period piece of literature. But the author's fertile imagination is equal to the occasion. The mystery of the wounded stranger occupies the first third of the story and its elucidation sets the stage for a thrilling and complicated tale of pursuit and counter-pursuit. A girl and two boys are the chief characters, supported and assisted out of their scrapes by a motley collection of aunts and uncles, family servants, inn-keepers, smugglers and a few notable historical figures such as Dr. Johnson and Horace Walpole. The parallel development of events smacks too much of the serial story for my taste but the style is racy and exciting and the

historical setting is carefully and thoughtfully arranged, marred only occasionally by an apparent instructional intention. The handling of the material becomes more skilful as the tale proceeds, and results in a full and memorable picture of the hazards of travel in the country and in London, with glimpses of house and inn interiors and the ways of life practised in them together with a wealth of trifling but interesting detail to cement and strengthen the whole. In short Miss Reason provides a substantial meal with rather scanty rations.

ROBINSON, M. *First Act.* Illus. by L. Kenyon
188 pp. 8 × 5¼ . . . . . Evans 9/6

A novelette that will bemuse and mislead any stage-struck girl. It tells of Matty Green who, in a very short space of time, works her way from amateur theatricals, through film-work and rep., to understudying a "star" in the West End, and her big chance. The uncertainty of theatre life, the tawdryness of behind-the-scenes, dressing rooms, lodging houses; the egoism of would-be actors and actresses, the heady seconds of applause, the dull long days of dismay, are all suggested, but shallowly. For any child seriously considering the stage as a career, there is not enough solid information about the real rather than the romantic aspects of the job; not nearly enough warning of the hard work that underlies all glamour. Matty herself makes a weak heroine. One cannot for a moment believe that anyone so dim and trivial could get her personality across footlights.

FOR THE INTERMEDIATE LIBRARY

BROWN, E. S. *Life in Fresh Water.* Illus. 64 pp.
9¼ × 6¾ . . . . . O.U.P. 10/6

For those interested in life in lakes, ponds, puddles, rivers and streams this will be an enlightening introduction. The author discusses and condenses with clarity the vast subject of the fresh-water flora and fauna, their structures, life histories, inter-relationships, and the diverse conditions of environment in which fresh water species may occur. Thus, almost insensibly, the reader is directed to the study of ecology.

The volume under review is the sixth of the "Oxford Visual Series," in which text and illustration are regarded as of equal importance. It is therefore to be regretted that

indications of the size of the objects portrayed are virtually omitted. It is true that many of the objects are stated to be magnified; but, amongst some 200 line drawings, only half-a-dozen have scale lines to indicate true size. When, on one page, more than one scale of magnification is used, the illustrations may mislead the beginner. An opportunity has been missed to train the novice's eye to the conventional scientific use of italics for names of families, genera and species. Italics below the illustrations are here used indifferently for English or scientific names.

A few minor blemishes occur as printers' errors and omissions (e.g. the transposition of text relating to the eggs of *Nepa* and *Ranatra* on p. 36 ; "Not all gnats lay their eggs in raft-like clumps," p. 35 ; and no mention is made of Aquatic Hymenoptera — Mymaridae, on p. 59).

The author deserves a larger canvas for his vast subject. With only 64 pages at his disposal for both text and illustrations, he is to be congratulated on his lucid and enlightening condensation of the many sections of his subject. The illustrations, apart from some of the rather indeterminate figures in green, are of the same standard of excellence as the text. The author has succeeded in squeezing very nearly a full quart into his pint pot.

CALDWELL, C. *Henry Ford.* Illus. Bodley Head 10/6

This book is history as well as biography: the history of the Ford Motor Company in America up to the World War II, with an additional chapter about the Ford works at Dagenham. The biography is of a farmer's son from the country near Detroit, whose father came from County Cork, and his development into the eccentric genius whose name is a household word. Because the man is more interesting to read about than the machines he made, it is a pity that after the first few chapters (which give a nice picture of the life of the early settlers), the biography gets quite crushed out by historical detail. The step-by-step development of the first Ford cars is exactly described, and even more space is given to Henry Ford's methods of mass production and how they were developed in his vast plants. The mechanically minded boy will doubtless find much that will interest him in this book, but it is a book more likely to please the practical child who seldom reads, rather than a true reader who, even in non-fiction, looks for story-telling and a hero.

DARBYSHIRE, S. *Nurse Carter Married.* 138 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . . . Chatto & Windus 7/6

This story follows the conventions and deviates in no way to give deeper detail or an unexpected turn of events. The later stages of a nurse's training are given superficial attention, while her two courtships and subsequent marriage are the underlying yet dominant theme. There is thus some human interest and the nursing aspect is that attendant on the personal relation between patient and nurse rather than technical and administrative information. This has its value but the general impression is one of limp and flabby insufficiency. A wordy manifestation that contains a little, but only a little, apart from the words.

EARLE, O. L. *Paws, Hoofs and Flippers.* Illus. by the author. 192 pp. 8½ × 6 . Bodley Head 12/6

This interesting book is based on the structure of manus and pes, together with the claw and its derivatives. On this basis, mammals are divided by the author into 5 sections :— with claws; with hooves and claws; with hooves; with flippers; and with nails. Although this method at once introduces difficulties, such as the allocation of the Pinnipedia to the clawed section, and the inclusion of the Marmosets and Lemurs amongst the nailed section, the young student is given a clear insight into the diverse habitats, the range of form fitting the species to its environment, and, in particular, the several means of progression that occur amongst the mammals. The opening chapter gives a simplified exposition of zoological classification — into invertebrates and vertebrates — and some of the characteristics that distinguish the Mammalia from other Vertebrata. Though excluded from this chapter, Evolution is mentioned, by allusion, in later chapters.

Some seventy odd lithograph illustrations reproduce successfully the authoress's charming pencil drawings, a large proportion of which would appear to be from life. These drawings, beautifully executed, in many cases show family groups with pleasing examples of parental care. These should lead the reader to consider animals as personalities.

A slight Transatlantic bias is betrayed by the *American* Badger (p. 76), the woodchuck associated with the fox's nursery (p. 60) and "trave*l*ing" p. 126), "Carniv*e*rous" (p. 126) is, doubtless, due to the printer. An additional sentence apiece would improve the description of the Reindeer

(spade-like tine of antler for scraping away the snow) and of the Whalebone Whale (nature of food and method of sieving it). In the chapter on "Skin-Winged" the anomalous *Galeopithecus* of the Order Dermoptera is the only example given, whereas many genera with patagia occur in the Orders Rodentia and Marsupialia.

Such slight defects do not, however, detract from the excellence of the publication.

LEY, W. *Engineers' dreams.* Illus. 192 pp. 8¼ × 5 Phoenix House 15/-

Books dealing with large engineering projects are plentiful enough. This is different in that it concerns only those great schemes which have failed to come to fruition, not because of the engineering problems involved, but for political reasons.

The Channel Tunnel project, first planned a hundred and fifty years ago and discussed from time to time since then until 1953 only to be turned down every time, will be familiar to most readers. But such projects as damming the Jordan, the creation of new lakes in Africa or the tremendously far-sighted Atlantropa scheme by which the level of the Mediterranean Sea would be lowered, thereby making available many thousands of square miles of new cultivable land, will be new to many. A fascinating book which will intrigue a wide range of readers whether or not they have any interest in engineering.

SCHOLES, P. A. *The Oxford Junior Companion to Music.* Illus. 435 pp. 10 × 7½ . O.U.P. 35/-

This book will already be known to most librarians and teachers, and unique as it is, it is safe to recommend to any young musician, choirboy or concert-goer. It is a truism to say only Dr. Scholes could have undertaken this work, as everyone knows only he has the necessary knowledge, industry — and inclination. His knowledge is stupendous; nothing and nobody of importance is omitted except, understandably, executants whose fame may be transitory and who may be replaced by new names in twenty years. His industry is fantastic. The list of his books which appears on the jacket is a monument to a man who wanted to write musical reference books (a *recherché* taste surely) and has devoted his life to doing so.

The present volume is recommended first for reference, second for study, but its primary use is not either of these, but for browsing. Who could not be beguiled by the beautifully laid out pages, the well-chosen photographs and diagrams ? I decided, arbitrarily, to investigate first his entry on choirboys, but it was some hours of happy wandering before I read it — and well worth reading it is.

Dr. Scholes is in fact much better on slighly unorthodox entries — look at the one on Memory, and another on Prodigies — than he is on the composers themselves. Here he is apt to disappoint. His articles too often seem a hotch-potch of miscellaneous information, thrown haphazardly together. There is no central direction, no attempt at assessment — none of the masterly compression, with all essentials included, that one finds, unexpectedly enough in *The Record Guide*. Dr. Scholes, also, is apt to crack weak jokes, indicated by exclamation marks, and at times to write down to an audience in whom he assumes musical knowledge and interests and who will be unimpressed by such an appeal as (p. viii), "And what a happy thing it would be for the author and publisher of this book if only a simple law could be passed that every choir-boy, on first taking office, should have a copy (of this book) presented to him by the authorities of the church or by his parents ! (Is this not a practical idea?)" Nor is there any good reason for the constant references to "the present writer" — "Don't (hum tunes) when you are crossing the road, for the present writer wants no dead young people on his conscience !" A bibliography under different composers would have been welcome but presumably the problems of keeping this up-to-date were felt to be insuperable.

In general, Dr. Scholes is scrupulously fair, if a trifle insular (I was surprised to find a much longer entry on Parry than on Sibelius). Merbecke jostles shoulders with Menotti, Gershwin with Orlando Gibbons. All in all Dr. Scholes's work is so well and lovingly performed that criticism can only sound captious. But it would be fair to sum up by saying that his matter, in this book at least, is better than his manner.

TAYLOR, R. *Circus Triumphant*. Illus. by T. Weare
191 pp. 8 × 5 . . . . Bodley Head 9/6

A good tale, equally suitable for boys and girls of the age just before serious novel-reading begins. Not as good as *Chad Hanna, Sampson's Circus* or *The Circus is Coming* —

successful perhaps because it is difficult to write a dull story about a travelling circus. So much in the ordinary lives of these showmen, their travels, animals, caravan homes, their risky work, is enough to make a book interesting to children, without any story at all. Mr. Taylor has not set out to write a "big" story of a major circus with its bang and glitter and continual come and go of curious characters. He has concentrated on the fortunes of one man and his son struggling to build up their own show as they wander about England just before Queen Victoria came to the throne. Their setbacks include robbery and armed fights and loss by drowning of their partner. But in spite of these downs — which make dramatic scenes in the story — the show is shown carrying gallantly on and heading for success at the end.

Here is pleasant, unpretentious, unremarkable storytelling, with some trouble taken to build up a real period atmosphere. The production of the book is shoddy, poor "blotting paper" paper and slick characterless illustrations.

TREASE, G. *The Young traveller in Greece.* Illus.
159 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Phoenix House 8/6

The Young Traveller Series, like all others, varies in quality from title to title. This is one of the better, one might say, best of the series. Mr. Trease, with a long list of historical stories to his credit, is obviously sufficiently versed in the history of Ancient Greece to write this book without undue effort and so to convey to his readers a sense of the Glory That Was Greece without detracting from the entertainment value of the book. He also has the ability to carry his readers along easily. The book remains a travel book, as it should, a travel book dealing with a country that has a more than usually cultural background. The main characters, a boy and girl and their parents, are alive and without the stiffness from which the characters in some titles in this series suffer. Their contrasting mental reactions to the scenes and monuments they visit are skilfully shown. This is an interesting, useful book which, used intelligently by teachers, might lead many young people to a much more vivid conception of Greece than they will acquire from the reading of many school textbooks. Except for a rather crowded final chapter Mr. Trease gives just enough information for it to be easily digestible.

HOWARD, L. *Living with birds.* Illus. 256 pp. 8 × 5½ . . . . . Collins 15/-

Readers of the author's *Birds as individuals* will need no recommendation to her new book. Not only does Miss Howard devote her garden, house and furniture to the benefit of birds, her daily time-table is arranged to suit their needs and demands, and her shopping list must be regulated by their seasonal requirements of food for sustenance and reward. Only long hours of observation will result in such a sight as that of a young Tit extracting a crumb from the beak of a young Robin "with the precision of a dentist."

Miss Howard is a *rara avis,* the first recorded of her kind since St. Francis. It is because of her affection for birds, her unwearying patience and the seemingly limitless time at her disposal for observation that her books will, for a very long time, remain unique.

She is mainly dealing with resident garden birds and so can follow their careers over a long space of years. Her birds are individuals with marked personalities, and her records will provide valuable evidence for those studying the significance of the finer shades of "display," the establishment of ownership of nest site and territory, codes of behaviour, powers of communication and allied subjects.

Not only birds but spiders and nine species of mammals supplement her fauna. In a sense her Vertebrate visitors can be regarded as rural inhabitants becoming urbanised. With urbanisation comes an increase in population density. They live in a Welfare State. This, perhaps, may account for Miss Howard's records of the toleration and even charity shown by the healthy to the weakly and injured. Many examples of trust in Man are related. Some of the conditions found in this Utopia will be absent for those living in the wild, and it would be unwise to apply generally Miss Howard's observations on her garden birds to those less fortunate. In environment such as that at Bird Cottage, birds, normally continually on the alert, can occasionally relax. Long may this happy state continue.

STEVENSON, E. M. & STEWART, C. *Animal camouflage* Illus. 195 pp. 8¾ × 5½ . . . . Black 15/-

This is a revision of the Pelican edition of 1946. In the earlier chapters, the many forms of camouflage in the animal kingdom are described, illustrated by informative and

illuminating examples. Of the eleven chapters six are devoted to discussing at length vision, light, colour, colour changes and diverse forms of visual organs. In other chapters these subjects recur. Since the authors are concerned with the effectiveness of camouflage, these chapters are relevant though the title needs amplification.

The illustrations are excellent. The text suffers from insufficient care in proof-reading. For example, one of two sentences on page 22 referring to wavelengths gives Angström units that conflict with those in Appendix 1. In Appendix 2 the colour of deoxygenated haemoglobin is stated to be pale red, whereas on page 39 it has a blue-purple colour range. On the same page copper and iron, respectively constituents of haemocyanin and haemoglobin are transposed. There are a number of other errors. The good qualities of the book may merit a second and more painstaking revision.

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